

[Pioneer Days]

TITLE - PIONEER DAYS

NAME - MELVINA CASBERG

AGE - FOURTEEN

SCHOOL - HOLMEN HIGH SCHOOL

ADDRESS - HOLMEN, WISCONSIN

SIGNATURES

John M. Casberg

Mrs. John M. Casberg

Pioneer Days I the spring of 1849 Mr. and Mrs. Barre Stoen of Ringsaker a province near Christiania Norway immigrated to America the "Promised Land."

After a perilous journey of 14 weeks they landed in New York. By means of the Erie Canal and Great Lakes they immediately proceeded to Wisconsin lured by the amazing tales told by those who had journeyed before them. They landed at Milwaukee.

Mr. Stoen purchased a team of oxen and a wagon as the family was to travel farther west. During the day they made slow progress and at night would find a sheltered nook to camp. After travelling in this manner for six weeks they arrived at their destination, weary from fatigue that the rude methods of transportation brought them.

Library of Congress

Long Coulee, 13 miles north of La Crosse, was chosen as their place of settlement. They were many miles from habitation as Mr. Stoen was the first settler in the vicinity of Holmen.

A secluded spot was selected on which to build a home. While the cabin was being constructed they lived in the great 2 outdoors making a bed of blankets. The cabin was rudely constructed of logs, having one small room with a fireplace.

Shortly after they made their home here many pioneers, mostly Scandinavians, came to this part of Wisconsin and settled Long Coulee.

One day a messenger on horseback rode over the prairie shouting fearful news to the pioneers. A band of Indians was coming directly there and they should seek places of safety. The women and children found refuge in one of the log cabins where they might be protected from the [copper?] colored race. The several men lay armed in the tall grass by the creek that was near their home. The tribe soon came and camped where the Holmen school now stands. After watching the Indians for a while the men decided to go and talk to them. The chief appeared very friendly, offered the peace pipe and presented various gifts. The next morning the Indians left and fear for them was gone.

During the winter months little was done. Mr. Stoen was very handy at all trades. He was a carpenter and shoemaker by trade; so he found work to engage himself during winter's reign. 3 In the fall of the year the crops were gathered in. Many fields were planted to oats as this was the main food. The method of harvesting oats was very peculiar. They would first cut the oats with a cradle. This implement is similar to a scythe but has blades arranged in such a way that the oats fall into bundles when cut. The binding was done by hand. After gathering in the sheaves they were arranged in a circle on the barn floor. The oxen trampled on them 'till the grain stalks were separated. The grain was brought to the mill at Holmen to be ground into flour. Another method of thrashing oats was to tie the sheaves into bundles and beat them vigorously 'till the grain fell off. Many tasty dishes were prepared from this substantial food.

Library of Congress

Corn was ground between two large stones and made into meal. Good store of cornmeal was required as it was used exclusively in baking.

Game was caught in abundance as animals of various kinds roamed the woods and prairies. Venison was used very much as it was so easily sought in the vicinity. Fish also was used a great deal. 4 Julia, the oldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Stoen, was the first white child born around Holmen. The Indians came to see her, often presented her with rare gifts and called her an "angel."

La Crosse was not very frequently visited as it took a day to drive there and back. Soleman Levi was proprietor of the only store in La Crosse at that date. Mr. Stoen purchased a stove, clock and several other household articles on one trip. He gave Mr. Levi a \$20 bill. Mr. Levi went to every home in La Crosse to get the bill changed but as he could not secure it Mr. Stoen had to purchase enough articles to amount to the \$20. The clock was the first clock in Long Coulee. It is a Seth Thomas, running by weights, and guaranteed for 5 years. Today at the age of 76 years it is in the possession of his grandson who resides at Holmen.

Mr. Stoen was very active in public affairs. He assisted the government surveyors while working in La Crosse County. He contributed liberal sums to the Luther College establishment in Halfway. Being a carpenter he did much in building the old Halfway church, the first church Holmen ever knew.

By the time of Mr. Stoen's death, which occurred in 1907, La Crosse County was an upright, progressive community; much different than the time of his arrival when it was a more prairie by the banks of the beautiful "Mississippi."

Title: Pioneer Days.

Name: Melvina Casberg.

Library of Congress

Age: 14 years.

School: Hilmen High School.

Address: Holmen, Wisconsin.

Signatures: John M. Casberg Mrs. John M. Casberg

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